

June 06, 1981

USSR-POLAND: Open Polemics

*Moscow's reiteration yesterday of its support for the hardline resolutions of the Katowice Party Forum and its denunciation of the release of four anti-Soviet dissidents as "another concession to counterrevolution" indicates that it is ready to confront the Polish party leadership openly over liberalization in Poland.* [REDACTED]

The Soviets are standing by the forum despite the fact that its resolutions were condemned by most of the Polish party--including the Politburo--and that it has been forced to suspend activities. TASS said yesterday that the forum's resolutions analyze the current situation from "Marxist-Leninist positions" and give a "principled appraisal" of the dangers threatening socialism in Poland. Most significantly, TASS criticized those Poles who described the position of the forum as "harmful"--the word used in the Polish Politburo statement about the forum's activities. [REDACTED]

Moscow undoubtedly realizes that the forum does not represent a base from which to build wide support in the party for a harder line. If the Soviets originally supported the forum because they believed it might constitute this base, they would have cut their losses and retreated quietly when it was isolated by party criticism. [REDACTED]

Soviet media also quickly condemned the release from pretrial custody of four dissidents belonging to the Confederation of an Independent Poland. They accused the confederation of being intent on "liquidating" Poland's socialist system and breaking up its alliance with the socialist countries. Public pressure for their release--in the form of hunger strikes, marches and protests--have grown in recent months, and the Polish regime probably hoped its action would lower domestic tensions over the charge it is holding political prisoners. [REDACTED]

The fact that the Kremlin has taken the stand it has indicates that it will attempt to get the Polish leadership to rein in liberalization through more open confrontation. The positions being taken by both sides are not irreversible, but by conducting the polemic in the open their room for maneuver is steadily shrinking. [REDACTED]

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